NAQCC News

May 12, 2012	NAQCC Web Site	Issue #166

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1. MAY SPRINT: Time is almost here for another of our very successful monthly sprints. We've broken records the past two sprints, and I hope we can improve on those records again this month. We're getting close to another benchmark or goal in the number of logs. Last month we had 137 which moved us a little closer to the 150 mark that we would like to reach someday soon.

We might not do it this month though because of the Dayton hamfest. Many folks leave a little early for their trip to Dayton. But hey, think of the following:

Many of those going to Dayton early may include some of those who seemingly always win their division in the sprints. So this is an excellent chance for those of you who may be new to our sprints or even those who never participated before to win one of our handsome certificates. Jump in and give it a try. Even if you don't win something, you'll find out how much fun just participating and meeting your fellow members can be. Also you'll earn points towards our coveted Friendship Club award. Remember sprint QSOs count for two points toward the award. There are all kinds of reasons why you should join in our monthly sprints, but perhaps the most important is showing the ham radio world that CW is very alive and very well. Also that it is a VERY efficient mode of operation since it only takes 5 watts or less to make many QSOs. That in a nutshell is what the NAQCC and its sprints are all about. See you this coming Wednesday evening (May 16) at 8:30 to 10:30PM EDT which of course as every ham knows means Thursday May 17 0030-0230Z. As many of our participants say, the two hour time frame is an ideal length. Writing this paragraph is really building my excitement, and I can't wait till Wednesday evening now.

One more thing definitely needs saying. Last month a couple of you had trouble with submitting your logs. All indications were that it went through the autologger perfectly, but it never reached Dean nor me. We don't want to lose even a single log, so in addition to continue to urge you to check the results page to be sure your score is there within 24 hours of submitting, now Dean is going to email an acknowledgement of receipt to each person whose log reached him OK. So if your score doesn't show up or you don't receive the receipt, BE SURE to check with both Dean and me BEFORE the log submission deadline of Sunday at 2400Z, and we'll be sure you're taken care of and your log is counted and scored, even if it takes till past the deadline to do it. However again, you must notify us BEFORE that deadline.

As we always mention here in the newsletters since we sign up so many new members between sprints, it is not necessary to be a top notch contester to enjoy our sprints. In fact it is somewhat the opposite. Our sprints

encourage those new to contesting, even those who have never been in a single contest, to participate. Our low-key, slow speed, friendly sprints are a great way to get one's feet wet in the fascinating world of ham-radio contesting. Many who made our sprints their entryway into contesting have now become very good contesters, while those who have no desire to pursue contesting further still enjoy our little friendly get-togethers each month as their only contests.

If you are new to the sprints, please read the complete sprint rules carefully so you'll know exactly what we need in the form of logs. While it is not necessary to use a computer program for your sprint logging, if you do use our recommended GenLog program correctly, then submit via the autologger, it will take you the least amount of time to compile and submit your log and report. Just a few minutes in most cases. If you have any doubts about using GenLog, check out our illustrated tutorial on using the program.

I've also created a 'check list' or 'tutorial' on how you can be almost guaranteed to have a GOLDEN LOG. This supplements the info in the Sprint General Rules. Check it out here if you haven't been getting a GOLDEN LOG lately. Maybe you'll see where you've been going wrong.

There is a plain text file (one for each continental USA time zone) of upcoming sprint dates for the rest of 2012. See the 'Print a Schedule' page in the 'Contests/Sprints' section of the web site. Print it out and post it somwhere prominently so you won't miss a single one of our sprints.

Read and understand the full general sprint rules and any specific rules for this month's sprint here.

2. APRIL CHALLENGE RESULTS: Our 4th in a row alphabet type challenge again proved very popular as we asked you to make names of birds this time around. We had 12 folks participate and report their results. Nine of those made all the names and will get a certificate. All 12 will get a Participation Point for their efforts.

Although we have all the challenges for the rest of the year set now, we still would like some input from you about what would make a good challenge. Keep in mind that challenges are not competitions among members, but merely a 'competition' with yourself to accomplish some kind of goal. So there are no challenges that say the 'most', 'earliest', 'fastest', etc. To eliminate any hint of any kind of competition, we are even thinking of postponing posting of results till the end of the challenge period - the end of a month.

Full Challenge results can always be found here.

3. GENERAL CLUB NEWS:

- From Tom WY3H: Greetings fellow NAQCC members. I know it's been quite some time since I have had anything to offer for the newsletter and I apologize for that. However there is something that I wish to bring to the attention of all of the loyal NAQCC members. About a year ago we offered NAQCC ball hats and John K3WWP and I have been wearing our hats to every radio event. This has served to promote and garner interest in the NAQCC. Now the club has taken another step as you might have seen on the web site by offering NAQCC T-shirts. The shirts are produced by the same company that designs our hats, Astrid's Embroidery. Both Astrid (N8YZI) and her husband Todd (WM8C NAQCC #4515) are licensed radio amateurs.

We would like to see a greater interest on the part of our members in proudly displaying the NAQCC logo on their hats and shirts. The folks at Astrid's Embroidery have gone through great effort to design hats and shirts with the NAQCC logo. However they told me that they are somewhat disappointed by the apparent lack of interest on the part of our members in ordering these items.

Although the shirts and hats pictured are shown in white or black, other colors are available with a full chest NAQCC logo as shown here or a smaller NAQCC logo and they are a perfect complement to our NAQCC hats. The logos reflect excellent workmanship and the shirts are good quality. John and I would like to encourage all members who have not yet done so to buy a shirt, hat, or both. We are coming in to the prime hamfest season and such events are a great opportunity to promote your club.

Prices are reasonable and vary slightly depending on size. Astrid's Embroidery web site may be accessed from the NAQCC web site or directly at http://www.astridsembroidery.com/naqcc-hat.html. By the way shipping is

quite fast. John and I ordered our shirts by phone on May 3 and they arrived on May 5. If several members live in close proximity to one another you might consider saving on shipping charges by having shirts or hats sent to one address. Your personal feedback on the shirts and hats will be appreciated. Please email me at **TJMITCHELLKX3@COMCAST.NET**.

Best 73/72 and good DXing to all.
Tom WY3H

- We NEED articles for these newsletters. With 6,020+ members, I'm sure there are at least 6,020 stories relating to CW and QRP out there that could be shared with fellow NAQCC members here in the newsletter. They can be as simple as telling us about a good DX QSO you made to a multi-part article describing construction of a rig, antenna, etc. including pictures. That's what the Member News section of the newsletter is there for. Enough said - take a look at the Member News section below then sit down at the keyboard and type out YOUR story and send it to Paul.

- Attention European members! Ton PA5LR is starting a series of challenges designed for you. Some of our challenges have been just about impossible for our European members to master. In those cases, Ton is providing an alternative European challenge. The first of these alternative challenges will take place in June. More info in the EU Chapter news below and in our next newsletter.

- This just in! The Boy Scouts of America are offering an award to scouts for proficiency in Morse Code as an additional language. Read more about it here.

- We're getting more sign-ups to operate our special event calls (N#A) during our anniversary celebration wb9PwQ October 7th through the 13th. We're not going to repeat all the details here again. You can find them on our N3A page, but here is a list of those who have signed up so far.

N1A - W1OH
N2A - NW2K KQ2RP
N3A - K3WWP WY3H KC2EGL WA3HIC AF3Z
N4A - AI4SV K3RLL KI4EBD
N5A -
N6A - K6MGO
N7A - WC7S
N8A -
N9A - KR9Z
N0A - KD0V

Where are our W5 and W8 area volunteers? Also we need more ops from those areas that have just one sign-up. In fact for all areas. We can't have too many ops. The more ops, the more air time for our N#A stations. Check the page we mentioned if you are interested in signing up or want more details. Thanks to those who have signed up already. Those in red will operate the sprint that week. We need all ten special calls active in the sprint.

- We had some input from a member about altering our Participation Award. I turned that down immediately since it is such a beautiful concept with one point awarded for each of our monthly events - a sprint and a challenge - that lends itself to easy analysis of how our members are accepting and taking part in our sprints and challenges. He thought we should both alter the number of points awarded and add other club activities to the award. The bottom line is that when you have something that has been very successful for several years you just don't change it without an excellent reason. We did change the award from one overall to Eastern, Western, and Canada/DX to now having an award for each USA call area, Canada, and DX. Those changes were justified due to the great increase in participation in our sprints and challenges over the years. And it didn't alter the basic concept of the award, just increased its scope.

However after a couple of email exchanges, I got to thinking that we could add something perhaps called an Activity Award while keeping the Participation Award exactly as it is.

Before I describe it, there is one catch. We would need someone to handle every aspect of it. My (K3WWP) NAQCC cup is overflowing right now with no room whatsoever for any added workload. In fact I still need to farm out some of the things I'm doing now, but that's another story. Let me get back on track.

The Activity Award could give one point to any club activity excluding the sprints and challenges. There could be a point for each time someone checks into one of our nets, each time someone earns one of our awards, each time someone contributes an article to our newsletter, buys some of our club merchandise, and anything else that can be thought of that shows a member is active in the club, whether or not they participate in our sprints and/or challenges.

So I serve the ball to you now for your return. Supply us with your thoughts about an Activity Award, and let us know if you would like to be the one to handle ALL the details. Email **NAQCC33@WINDSTREAM.NET** with the subject Activity Award. From now on it's in your hands whether we drop the idea or implement it WITH HELP FROM ONE OF YOU TO RUN THE AWARD.

- It distresses me to find that every time we make a mailing on our NAQCC mail list, I get several messages from our mail list provider that so-and-so has been unsubscribed for excessive bounces or some other reason. It appears to me that those members gave us an email address that they hardly ever check or one that doesn't even exist any longer. If you didn't unsubscribe intentionally, and that's fine if you did, and have not been getting our emailings, you might check on this and give us a working email address to replace the faulty one. That way you won't miss out on any important club emails. Thank you.

- Just a quick reminder we're continuing with the hidden call sign idea originally suggested by Bill KB3XS. Somewhere in this newsletter is a call sign of a member in a place that is definitely out of context and containing a mix of upper and lower case letters. If it is YOUR call sign and YOU find it, email **NAQCC33@WINDSTREAM.NET** BEFORE the publication date of the next newsletter (May 26) and win a gift certificate for 100 NAQCC QSL cards produced by the CheapQSLs.com company run by Hal K6RF (#0171) and donated by the NAQCC thanks to your generous monetary donations to the club. Cheap refers only to the price, not the quality of the cards. They are beautiful and a great way to show your pride in being a NAQCC member. See the main page of the web site to find out how to purchase your own cards.

4. CHAPTER NEWS:

Here is where our club chapters present news about their chapter activities. We currently have three chapters - European, Texas, and Western Pennsylvania. We're looking forward to expanding that roster. Chapters are more or less independent local gatherings organized by members in a geographical area and subject to a list of guidelines under the auspices of the NAQCC. If you would be interested in starting a chapter in your area, let us know and we'll send a copy of the guidelines.

NAQCC EUROPEAN CHAPTER:

Items in this section are from EU Chapter President Matt MW3YMY unless otherwise credited. Questions or comments should go to **MATT@MATTIRELAND.CO.UK** The EU Chapter web site is at http://www.naqcc-eu.org/

European chapter activity has been somewhat low over the last few months, for a number of reasons. To try and start the chapter back up again and spark extra life into the European QRP/CW community, we shall be holding the next sprint on 19th June. Please try and take part if you can - it would be great to get the chapter back to where it was six months ago. More details will be posted closer to the time, but please keep the date in your diary. Any comments and suggestions for activities are welcomed at the above email address.

From Ton PA5LR - The proposed procedure (for our new EU challenges):

1. I publish this page (rules) as an author or contributor of Matt's WordPress website.
2. Members can send their log to naqcc-eu@yahoo.com.
3. I publish the logs and the soapbox remarks on the (EU Chapter) website.
4. I send an overview of the results to John (K3WWP).
5. Rick (AA4W) sends the certificates.

From John K3WWP - I think this is an excellent idea by Ton, and heartily support it. I hope our EU members will participate as much as possible to encourage Ton in his efforts. I don't have an exact count, but I know there are several hundred EU members in the club - plenty to make the EU challenges as successful as our main NAQCC challenges.

NAQCC TEXAS CHAPTER:

Items in this section are from TX Chapter Director Ron K5DUZ unless otherwise credited. Questions or comments should go to **WEBMASTER7388@NAQCCTX.COM** The TX Chapter web site is at http://www.naqcctx.com/

The East Texas QRS Net (ETN) meets each Monday evening at 1900 CDST (0000 UTC). The net is on 7060 KHz until next fall. The ETN net is open to all comers, not just stations in Texas, so if you hear the net in session please check-in with Allen, KA5TJS, #4512, the NCS.

QRN from local thunderstorms has been a problem for the ETN the past few weeks and the May 7th net was the worst in recent memory, with zero check-ins recorded. However, we are past due for a quiet Monday evening so please look for the ETN next week. Check the weekly NAQCC net e-mail for the latest ETN info.

How time flies when you are enjoying the great hobby of amateur radio! Can you believe that the next NAQCC Sprint is next week? All Texas hams are invited to jump into the fray next Wednesday evening, May 16th (Texas time).

Remember that all NAQCC members located in Texas (359 at last count) are automatically members of the Texas Chapter. We would love to hear from you about any of your recent ham activities, new QRP rig or antenna.

NAQCC WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA CHAPTER:

Items in this section are from John K3WWP unless otherwise credited. Questions or comments should go to **NAQCC33@WINDSTREAM.NET** All chapter news can be found ONLY here in this section of the newsletter.

One of the great things about chapters is the personal fellowship among NAQCC members which makes ham radio that much greater a hobby. Just as a personal example, the last couple of times that Mike KC2EGL and I got together, we spent some time on the air with my station working DX. Other than those times, I hadn't been chasing much DX. But having Mike there with me peaked my interest in DX for those times. I would work the DX station, then let Mike work it also. I got as much enjoyment (maybe more) when Mike worked the station as when I did. That's just one example, as I said, but there are many other things in ham radio that are more fun when done with someone. It's a shame that more folks haven't formed NAQCC Chapters around the country or World to present opportunities to do things locally with other hams. It's also a shame that we lost one of our chapters that was quite active in doing things. It's hard to understand.

5. NAQCC QRS NETS:

News and net reports in this section are from QRS Net Manager Gary KS4JI unless otherwise credited. Gary will handle all Net related material at this email address:
pix email ks4ji (1K)

I used to love riding the roller coaster. Now, with the passage of time I figured those days were far in the past. Boy, was I ever wrong! The radio conditions these past few days have been just like a roller coaster ride. One minute you're up and the next you're down. Hopefully conditions will level off to just plain good for a while soon. I want to thank everyone for all their good efforts to make these nets work even in the worst of conditions. You are very much appreciated.

I've noticed that there are many geographical areas that aren't well covered by a local net. Wouldn't it be great if we could have a net in say, every call area (which do pretty much match geographical areas) each week. W9 is the upper Midwest, for example. The call areas that cover a large area could be split up, say W4 North and W4 South, etc. When you consider the number of members we have it is very feasable but there is one missing element. You! All we need are volunteers. Not experienced, not accomplished, and not even good looking! We could do it you know. If you are somewhat fearful to do it alone don't worry. We can get someone to ride along with you on the airwaves until you are comfortable leading by yourself. Our speed may be slow but we can still get the job done where others don't even try. CW is the best thing that ever happened to amateur radio and it's just as much fun now as it ever has been. Encourage others to join in but more importantly make that step that's needed to give them an opportunity to learn and grow in the hobby. Email me, phone me (Saturday Noon to 6PM Eastern Time at 863-899-3507), or let one of us know that you are willing to take this important step. I need you, amateur radio needs you, and you can do it if you only will. I'm waiting to hear from you now. Who will contribute to our great hobby. Don't be a sponge by just taking it all in. It's time to give back. Thank you in advance.
73 Gary KS4JI

Latest NAQCC QRS Nets schedule can always be found on the NAQCC web site here.

Recent Net Activity report:

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Net Name (Abbreviation)
Date(UTC) NCS   Participants

NAQCC Main QRS Net (NQN)
4-29-12       N4PLK   -9-       N4PLK N6TLU K9EYT N4JD VA3PEN K1IEE W4HH N9RLO WB0QQT
5-6-12        N6TLU   -9-       N6TLU N4PLK K3NLT N4JD N8IUP K1IEE W4HH N9RLO KR9Z

NAQCC East Texas QRS Net (ETN)
4-30-12       KA5TJS  -4-       KA5TJS W5IQS KE5YUM KE5YGA
5-7-12        KA5TJS  -1-       KA5TJS (Terrible conditions)

NAQCC Rocky Mtn Regional/Continental QRS net (RMR) - Tuesday
5-8-12        WC7S    -6-       WC7S K1IEE K0GLT KG9HM AE7CG KG0YR
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NAQCC Rocky Mtn Regional/Continental QRS net (RMR) - Thursday
4-26-12       WC7S     -3-       WC7S K1IEE WB0UFF
5-10-12       WC7S     -2-       WC7S KG0YR

NAQCC East Coast QRS Net (ECN)

NAQCC Pacific NorthWest QRS Net (PNW)
4-26-12       KE7LKW   -3-       KE7LKW WB4SPB N6KIX
5-3-12        KE7LKW   -2-       KE7LKW KB7DYP
5-10-12       KE7LKW   3 -       KE7LKW  W7MWF  WB4SPB
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For more net info, see CW Assistance/QRS Nets on the web site.

6. NAQCC CW ASSISTANCE PROJECT:

Items in this section are from CW Assistance Project Coordinator Ron K5DUZ (L) unless otherwise credited.
If you are interested in helping out or need help with any CW and/or QRP matters contact:
K5DUZ - **NAQCCSKED@FLASH.NET**

It looks like this section is just taking up a little unused space each newsletter, and that's a real shame. I certainly hope that Ron can start providing some information here again as soon as his work project is completed. I'm thinking of perhaps re-running some of the excellent info that Ron provided here several months (or is it over a year now) ago until he can provide some new info.

Meanwhile with over 6,020 members now, and every single one having an interest in CW and QRP, surely there must be many of you who could share some very helpful information here. That would be a big help to those members who also love CW and QRP, but are new to the mode and could use a little guidance.

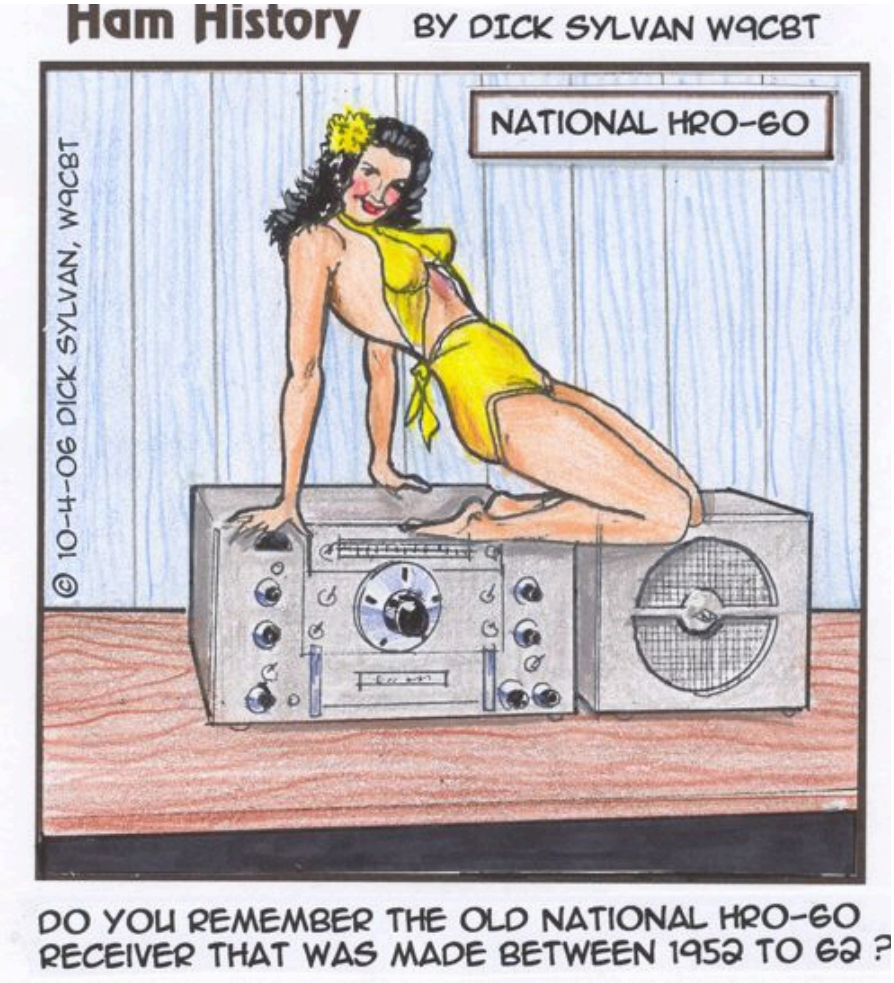
Here's just a little input on the info I wrote here about calling CQ just as an example of how helpful YOUR input could be IF YOU ONLY TAKE TIME TO PROVIDE SOME. Sorry for yelling there, but it is frustrating.

Don K3RLL emailed, ".... And finally, you wrote in this latest Newsletter about the art of CQing. John, you have taught me many things over the years that I've had the good fortune to spend time with you, and one of them was 'the art of effective CQing for QRP'. We've both shaken our collective heads at the endless drone of the unidentified CQer, or the one who actually does identify every 10 or 15 minutes, but keeps on calling. (Smile) Your suggestion to make the calls short with short listening breaks has had a very positive impact on my CQ return ratio. Combined with a memory keyer programmed appropriately, my QSO success rate has gone up dramatically after implementing your suggestions. I was so impressed when you first demonstrated that procedure that, as you may remember, I ran back to NB to build a memory keyer. What a difference! Thank you."

That makes me feel good. Now wouldn't you like to get that good feeling by helping someone with YOUR info here in the CW Assistance section? Just sit down at the keyboard and pour out your knowledge about some aspect of CW and QRP into an email and send it off to Ron for use here in the section. Thank you.

7. CW CARTOON OF THE MONTH:

Let's take a comedy and/or nostalgia break now courtesy of Dick Sylvan W9CBT NAQCC #2062. Dick has been a long-time QRP/CW operator. One of his many talents is being a cartoon artist. Dick's cartoons appear monthly in the K9YA Telegraph, a free ham radio eZine, where he is staff cartoonist. The NAQCC is very honored to reprint Dick's cartoons originally published in the K9YA Telegraph. Dick has also authored a book entitled "Hi Hi - A Collection of Ham Radio Cartoons" available via his web site. A new cartoon has appeared in each of our even-numbered newsletters ever since their debut in Issue #058, November 17, 2007.


Ham History BY DICK SYLVAN W9CBT
NATIONAL HRO-60
© 10-4-06 DICK SYLVAN, W9CBT
DO YOU REMEMBER THE OLD NATIONAL HRO-60 RECEIVER THAT WAS MADE BETWEEN 1952 TO 62 ?

QRP QRP

8. MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

This section is managed by Paul N8XMS and any questions about it should go to PAUL142857@GMAIL.COM. Paul selects members at random and asks them if they would like to be featured in the Member Spotlight in the newsletter.

Gene Summers N4FZ #2651

I am Gene Summers, N4FZ, NAQCC member #2651. I started in Ham Radio as a 15 year old, in 1978. My Dad, Gene Sr., (S.K. NQ4O), and I took our Novice tests at Joe's, K4ULW's QTH, in Louisville. We started out with a Yaesu FT101EE, and dipoles, later adding a TH3MK3, which I still use today. It was several years later, before I became interested in QRP. I moved to Paducah in 1986, with my parents. As a Senior, at Murray State University, I selected to build the K9AY, 40M QRP transceiver, by Gary Breed. It took about a week of assembly time to build the kit, and I received an A on my project. The QRP transceiver worked great, and I made many enjoyable QSO's with it, and an old Army J-38 key, I bought as a Novice. I remember how excited I was when I made that first QRP QSO with it. I will admit that there's something very unique and exciting about working the world on something you built with your own hands!

Presently, I enjoy contesting, CW, and Phone and Digital modes, and chasing DX. I am currently recovering from major surgery, and spend a good deal of time on HF, working on my 5BDXCC, and 5BWAS. I have received, the WAS, DXCC, as well as the Triple Play Award #662. I recently purchased a K2, which I will use QRP, in upcoming NAQCC Sprints. My other HF rig is an Elecraft K3, with a KPA500, which I assembled in January. I also use a Butternut HF9V vertical for the WARC bands and 40/80m.

In addition to Ham Radio, I also enjoy vintage/modern military rifles and pistol shooting, and playing old time fiddle and mandolin. I also like to fish. I am a licensed Master Electrician in Kentucky, working in construction. I am married to my sweetheart, Leah for over 20 years. We have two spoiled canine companions, Jasmine, a dachshund, and Morgan, our pit bull.

9. NEWS ITEMS AND ARTICLES BY OUR MEMBERS:

This section is a forum for you to tell other members what you've been up to on the ham bands or to submit an article dealing with some aspect of CW and QRP operation or equipment. Examples might include, but not limited to, antenna projects, QRP and/or SDR equipment, tuners, battery technology, keyers, logging, or other related topic of interest to the QRP community.
Send your news items and articles to our news editor Paul KD2MX at **KD2MX@ARRL.NET**. Deadline for submitting news items for the next newsletter is May 24. For your convenience any links in this section will open in a new browser window so you can come immediately back here to the newsletter just by closing that extra window. DISCLAIMER: Any views expressed in this section are those of the member submitting them, and may or may not be those of the NAQCC or its officers.

- **From John K3WWP #0002** - I think the most exciting and fun times I've had in ham radio since the last newsletter were working DX with Mike KC2EGL in my shack. As I mentioned above in the WPA Chapter news, I would work a DX station then turn the key over to Mike to work the station with his call. That worked every time. The best band was 20 meters which was really hot in the 0100Z hour which is the time we would get on. Well, any more about that would just be repeating myself from what I said above.

- **From Cliff KU4GW #1491 -** Here is great and true story for my fellow NAQCC members! I recently had a QSO on 3.895 Mhz LSB with Don, WD4CWE. I told Don that I had sold my Yaesu DVR-2 digital voice recorder that came along with my FT-1000MP transceiver which I bought last year when my old one was hit by lightning. I told him that I sold it to purchase a QRP rig but, as Murphy's Law always prevails, I had to use part of the money to put brake pads and rotors on my daughter's car so I only had $65 left to buy a used QRP rig.

I sat up all that night playing on the radio and PC and was still asleep at noon when my daughter Elizabeth woke me up and said, "Hey Dad, do you know someone from Dolly Parton Parkway in Sevierville, Tennessee?". I replied, "That's where Ten-Tec is". She said, "What's that?". I said, "That's Tennessee Technical", and she replied that the UPS man had just dropped off a box from there for you.

She opened it and inside was a brand spanking new Ten-Tec R4020 two-band QRP transceiver. On the invoice in the box it said, "Mr. Fox -A Gift For You From Your Friends On 3895!" Can you believe those guys? They set me up with a $249 QRP radio! All I need now is to make or buy a portable antenna and then I'll be on the air from some mountain top or park doing QRP in the Field operations! Also, it was great timing because that day was the one-month anniversary of the death of my dear wife of 27 years, Irene. I knew I was going to be depressed when I woke up, but this sure cheered me up! God bless whoever it was that was involved in sending me this radio! It was a true blessing to me!

- **From Bob K9OSC #3894 -** Challenges and Sprints - The recent (May) NAQCC Challenge was most interesting and it was a "challenge" for me in several respects. While I agree that being centrally located in the U.S. has some advantages, others work against me or are at least on a par with those who live on either coast. I have lived on both coasts (Virginia Beach, VA and Garden Grove, CA) so I have had experience on both ends of the country.

I offer a few thoughts for those who think that being centrally located in the U.S. is easy. Checking with others up here I can tell you that those in the MN Wireless Society, a very serious DX and contesting group, think that we live in a "black hole." There are times that I sincerely agree with them. But, as in most adversarial situations there are workarounds and those have to be applied to realize success.

1. I have learned in both the Sprints and Challenges that I have to adjust for daylight savings time and changes in the grayline. That is a MUST no matter where you live. As the planet changes position and attitude, station operation has to change with it.

These days propagation is stagnant at best and the solar flux, whether or not that is to be relied upon as a harbinger of good or bad conditions, has dropped significantly with resultant poorer conditions. Solar flares and radio blackouts only contribute in an adversarial way. Accordingly, I optimize my opportunities by picking the better times and frequencies to seek stations. Operating QRP has it's own challenges, so one must make the most of every part of that five watts or less that you are using.

2. I changed my operating schedule and did an immense amount of listening. More so than I have done in other Challenges. I had to fit a certain criteria which was a station licensed for a given district. That meant sequestering myself in front of my radio and listening sometimes for hours on end for the right station. When trying to spell words for a Challenge it becomes even more focused.

3. During the week those calling CQ are rare, at least for me. I copied QSO's, used both of my rig's VFOs so I could keep track of two QSOs at a time and then tailended when the QSO was over. Sometimes it worked but several times I came up empty. When there are only a few stations on you take what is available.

My last needed station, which was a "4", really tested this technique. Two stations in a row that I monitored didn't come back. I had invested more than an hour listening for them to finish and both were quite readable here. C'est guerre (that's war). The lesson here is listen, listen, listen.

4. Of the last 22 days here in MN, we have had rain for 20 days. Storms, lightning generated QRN and in-city line noise all took their toll. Live in a big city and you will experience line noise whether you like it or not. Add the others and you have a challenge in and of itself. Persistence is the key to getting the job done. By the way, in 2010 MN had 131 tornadoes and in 2011 we had 31 tornadoes. So far this year we have had six. The QRN levels do get high at times!

Fatigue may set in earlier than normal but persistence is needed to stay on track. Sure, I could have waited longer and stretched out the Challenge over the full month, but my schedule this particular month is more than hectic and it was now or never.

5. Normally, 40 meters is the workhorse band for me. But, during daytime hours it is almost completely deserted here. I mean, NO audible signals. I prowled 20 meters incessantly and worked some stations that were just at the noise level. I spent time at 14.060 but went all the way down to 14.003 as well. Early evenings 30 meters was in play but only slightly.

I made the QSOs work by sticking with it and applying good amateur practice. I slowed down to make CW easier to copy, made sure I was using the correct antenna (horizontal versus vertical polarization) and made repeats when necessary. I use a CF Zepp that is 90 feet long and elevated to 30 feet in the center. My ground mounted vertical is a rebuilt Hustler 4BTV.

Develop some good operating skills. Become proficient at CW at some reasonable speed. You don't have to be a 20 wpm operator to be successful. Speeds in the 10 to 15 wpm range are quite adequate. Learn what you have to and master it to the degree possible. Learn how to send properly with whatever keying device you have. Learn not to get rattled and take your time, the other guy will! Finally, learn how to zero-beat a station and get on "his frequency." Narrow bandwidths make for easier copying and greater noise reduction. But they also limit how far away you can copy a station from your transmit frequency. Being "on target" is the best way to make the other station hear you.

You may have noticed in previous Challenges that I have many times finished early in the month. I have a tendency to "attack" the Challenge which has paid off for me. Not everyone can do that and they have to work within their own restricting time frames.

I can recall one month this year when the bottom dropped out of the bands two days after I had completed my Challenge in six days. I knew that the solar storms were coming so I put an emphasis on what I was doing. My XYL commented that she understood my commitment and she would keep the dog company during the process. My XYL is a fantastic person and has always supported my ham vice. Forty-eight years later we are still going strong!

One thing that I value above all else is to work the station properly, within all rules and applicable instructions and to ensure that the integrity of the QSO is there. If there is any question as to validity, I dump the QSO from the record and rework the area or whatever is required. The sanctity of the "honor" reporting process which NAQCC has established is resolute. There is only one way to submit results and that is with completely valid contacts! Cheat and you only cheat yourself.

While some stations may be "easier" to work because of proximity, many are not and I have had to find the opportunity rather than expect that it will be thrust upon me by circumstance. Personally, that is what makes the Challenges so much fun. If they were "fall off of a log" easy then they would cease to intrigue me. Time of year, band conditions, available operating time, weather and the like all contribute to what we face no matter where we reside. Within the constraints I have here, I take what is available and work hard to make it happen.

These are just some thoughts from my perspective and what has worked for me. Hopefully we will see more stations in future Challenges and bigger scores in the Sprints. Just go for it. You can't lose!

Club email address - **NAQCC33@WINDSTREAM.NET**

The publication of our next newsletter will be announced via email to all members for whom we have a valid email address unless you specifically have unsubscribed from the email.

Past on-line newsletters beginning with issue #042 are now archived on the site. So if you missed seeing any

past issues, you can check them out in the archives.

Unless otherwise credited, all items are written by K3WWP.

If you came directly to this newsletter, we invite you now to browse the NAQCC Web Site.